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**U.S. Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao Receives the
Ronald H. Brown Leadership Award at the 2006 National
Minority Enterprise Development Week Conference in
Washington, D.C.**

WASHINGTON—U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao will receive the Ronald H. Brown Leadership Award on August 30, 2006 from the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), U.S. Department of Commerce. The Ronald H. Brown Leadership Award, named after the late 30th U.S. Secretary of Commerce who was the first African American to hold this cabinet position, recognizes demonstrated leadership in promoting entrepreneurship, economic development and trade.

"Secretary Chao represents the essence of the Ronald L. Brown Leadership Award," states Ronald N. Langston, MBDA National Director. "She has been a strong advocate for economic development and serves as a role model for public service leadership. I am pleased to honor her during our National MED Week Conference."

"I appreciate this recognition for the Department of Labor's efforts under President Bush's leadership to help traditionally underserved communities access opportunity in mainstream America," said Secretary Chao. "America's diverse workforce is one of our country's greatest competitive advantages. This Administration has launched many new initiatives to promote the rich diversity of America's workforce, which strengthens our nation's competitiveness in the worldwide economy."

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao is the first Asian American woman to serve in the President's cabinet in U.S. history. Upon her appointment, she has been dedicated to carrying out the Department of Labor's mission of promoting and protecting the health, safety, retirement security, and competitiveness of the nation's workforce. Under her leadership, the Department has set new worker protection enforcement results, including recovering record back wages for low wage immigrant workers. The Department has also launched comprehensive reform of the nation's publicly funded worker training programs, to better serve dislocated and unemployed workers.

Secretary Chao's career has spanned the public, private and non-profit sectors as she has served as President and Chief Executive Officer of United Way of America, Director of the Peace Corps, Deputy Secretary at the U.S. Department of Transportation, Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission, Deputy Maritime Administrator in the U.S. Department of Transportation and White House Fellow.

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Her private sector experience includes having worked as Vice President of Syndications at BankAmerica Capital Markets Group and as a banker with Citicorp. Prior to her nomination as Secretary of Labor, she was a Distinguished Fellow at The Heritage Foundation.

Secretary Chao received an M.B.A. from the Harvard Business School and an undergraduate degree in economics from Mount Holyoke College. She also studied at M.I.T., Dartmouth College, and Columbia University. She is the recipient of 28 honorary degrees.

MED Week, established by Presidential Proclamation each year since 1983, recognizes the role that minority entrepreneurs play in building the American economy through the creation of jobs, products and services, in addition to supporting their local communities. MBDA offers management and technical assistance to minority entrepreneurs with small, medium and large-sized companies through its network of funded centers throughout the United States.

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About the Minority Business Development Agency, US Department of Commerce

Founded in 1971 and headquartered in Washington, DC, the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. MBDA is the only federal agency created specifically to foster the establishment and growth of minority-owned businesses in this Nation. The Agency actively promotes the growth and competitiveness of large, medium and small minority business enterprises by offering management and technical assistance through a network of forty local business centers throughout the United States. Statistics on minority businesses and resources to build and sustain minority businesses are available at www.mbda.gov.

About National Minority Enterprise Development Week

For 24 years, the National MED Week Conference has served as the premiere event for minority businesses held in our Nation's Capital sponsored by the MBDA and other federal and private sector partners. Premium sponsors of the 2006 Conference include BAE Systems, IBM, Chevron, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon Company, VISA, FedEx and GVCwinstar. With nearly 1,000 attendees, the National MED Week features a White House breakfast series, networking events, industry-driven workshops, *State of Commerce* luncheon, business expo, and an awards gala. MED Week, designated by Presidential Proclamation since 1983, honors the achievements of minority-owned business enterprises in America. To learn more about MED Week, visit www.medweek.gov or call 1-888-5-MED WEEK.